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DE RUEHLI #2054/01 2211544  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH(CCY ADXF2ED19 TOQ9825 640A)  
P 091544Z AUG 07 ZDS  
FM AMEMBASSY LISBON  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6127  
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES PRIORITY  
RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0064  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 0042  
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM PRIORITY 0005  
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0038

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 002054

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (MODIFIED COLLECTIVES)

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/09/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PO](#)  
SUBJECT: PORTUGUESE MFA ON MIDDLE EAST, EU-AFRICA SUMMIT,  
DARFUR, AND CUBA

REF: LISBON 2046

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. David Ballard for reasons 1.4 (B)  
and (D).

Summary

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11. (C) MFA political director Vasco Bramao Ramos told the Charge on August 8 that Portugal has not yet decided whether it will contribute troops to the new UN mission in Darfur. He expressed confidence that the EU-Africa summit would take place in December -- saying the EU and Africa have much to discuss -- but worried about the impact on other EU member states of strong UK opposition to Robert Mugabe's attendance. PM Socrates is still contemplating a trip to the Middle East, perhaps in late August. Bramao Ramos backed away from his previous suggestion, to a number of senior USG officials, that Venezuela be encouraged to push the Cuban regime in a democratic direction. End Summary.

12. (U) In a discussion on August 8 regarding next steps in Kosovo (reftel), Portuguese MFA political director (U/S for Political Affairs-equivalent) Vasco Bramao Ramos and Charge also touched on Darfur, the Middle East, the EU-Africa summit, and Cuba's political transition. Bramao Ramos was accompanied by deputy Jorge Cabral and Balkans advisor Carla Monteiro. CDA was joined by poleconcounts.

Afghanistan/Darfur

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13. (C) Charge thanked Portugal for its recently announced contribution of an additional 15 troops for an OMLT in Afghanistan and asked whether Lisbon planned to contribute as well to the UN force in Darfur. No decision has yet been made, Bramao Ramos replied. Negotiations regarding the composition of that mission are ongoing among potential contributors and deployments will not be made until later in the year, so there is still time. He lamented, however, that Portuguese forces are currently seriously overstretched.

EU-Africa summit

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14. (C) Asked for an update on preparations for the EU-Africa summit Portugal hopes to host in December, Bramao Ramos underscored the importance of the summit taking place, insisting that Europe has much work to do with Africa. He

noted that the EU planned soon to assign a permrep to the AU in Addis who would represent both the Council of the European Union and the Commission.

¶15. (C) On the substance, preparations are going well. Both sides have been working hard on a joint strategy document and an action plan, both of which would be blessed at an AU-EU troika meeting in October.

¶16. (C) Bramao Ramos acknowledged that the question of Zimbabwean attendance poses a challenge but expressed confidence that the issue "will be adequately dealt with." One basic principle from which Portugal will not stray is that all African countries will be invited, and in the same way. One possibility under consideration is that the AU will invite the Africans and the EU will invite the Europeans, and there are other possibilities (although he did not elaborate). He noted that they had found a way to ensure Morocco would participate. In any case, the political director added, invitations won't be sent until late September, so there is still time to find a solution. Discussions of the issue among member states are ongoing, according to Bramao Ramos. He said Portugal has been talking to the United Kingdom "from the beginning," and lamented that the Brown government was tougher on the question of Mugabe's participation than its predecessor, perhaps because PM Brown is not ending his term but will face elections in the future.

¶17. (C) The political director suggested that the EU and China should talk to each other about Africa. We have told them not to play "the nasty game they are playing in Africa," and an increasing number of African governments are growing uncomfortable with China's activities on the continent, Bramao Ramos claimed. He added that the Chinese government has begun to realize it must change the way it is doing

things in Africa and pay more attention to governance issues.

Bramao Ramos also expressed concern about India's increasingly active role in Africa, particularly in the export of generic medicines.

Middle East

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¶18. (C) The political director confirmed that PM Socrates still hopes to visit the Middle East, perhaps at the end of August, although it is still very much up in the air. His itinerary would likely include Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, and one other Arab country, perhaps Egypt, Saudi Arabia, or Jordan.

Cuba

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¶19. (C) Bramao Ramos raised the need to coordinate closely with the U.S. on Cuba's political transition. He added his view that two South American countries have particular influence in Cuba. President Lula of Brazil, he said, can be a strongly positive force, whereas Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez will very likely play an unhelpful role (although there is a slight chance he could be useful). Chavez needs to be reminded that he assumed power through legitimate democratic elections and that that is what must happen in Cuba.

¶10. (C) According to Bramao Ramos, Cuba has blocked the EU's efforts to establish a formal human rights dialogue with the regime. Pressing Cuba to participate in that dialogue will be a priority of Portugal's EU presidency -- Bramao Ramos cited Portugal's "reasonably good relationship" with Cuba as reason to be optimistic that Havana would agree. The Portuguese have told the Cubans, both before and during their presidency, that there is only one direction to move in, only one direction which will bring the island peace and prosperity, and that is the direction of democracy and greater respect for human rights.

Comment

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¶11. (C) There were no major surprises. Regarding the EU-Africa summit, it is clear that Portugal hasn't yet found a solution to the question of Zimbabwean participation. The tougher stance taken by the Gordon Brown government on this issue clearly concerned Bramao Ramos, mostly, we suspect, because of its potential impact on the views of other member states. On Cuba/Venezuela, we were pleased to see the political director singing a very different tune than he had in recent meetings with A/S Shannon, A/S Fried, and the Ambassador, when he advocated encouraging Chavez to play an active role in nudging the Cuban regime toward democratic reform. The Foreign Minister's office had recently confirmed that Bramao Ramos's views on this issue did not reflect GOP policy or the views of the Minister, and he had clearly been reined in when we spoke to him on August 8.  
Ballard